

The Big Ugly

Christ the Redeemer Church
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5th Sunday of Easter

Proverbs 31:10-31
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One middle-aged husband in our church said to me this week that he and his wife were working through some issues in their marriage this week. Then he said, "I guess you don't have those problems, huh?" I just looked at him and said, "Are you kidding?"

His perception was that our marriage was untouched by daily issues. Scriptures and ministers project a false image... words clean up life and make life too issue-free.

Today is Women's Day at CTRC, basically. On this Mother's Day we give a beautiful carnation to every woman here this morning. To honor the Maternal Instinct of women.

Curtis commented this week that Proverbs 31 is not a chapter that some people like to be read in church. I told him it depends on how you preach the chapter as to what it is saying. It is not a Directive toward Women. It is a piece written to highlight the strengths of one particular image of the characteristics of a one type of woman.

I could write a chapter to highlight each woman in this church. Each woman is different.

For instance, I grew up in a church that taught the literal interpretation of every verse. So every woman should be like this Proverbs 31 woman. Every woman should get up before dawn and cook breakfast for her husband.

So I married with that expectation. As I have told you before, Pam shattered that notion within three weeks of marriage. After three weeks of marriage, I pressed her on the breakfast issue. She cleared up the question, "I don't do breakfasts. I do dinner but not breakfasts." When I pressed the issue more, she burnt waffles the first three Saturdays she baked them. I got the message. She does not rise up before dawn and cook breakfasts.

That comes from her United Methodist Woman's interpretation of Proverbs 31. She does lots of wonderful things in life as a woman and as a wife and as a mother, but she does not do breakfasts. I learned quickly after marriage that there are different interpretations to these scriptures about male and female roles!

The Kyle boys have been cooking all night on Big Ugly in order to serve all the women in CTRC a nice meal on this Mother's Day. Beef ribs, pork ribs, brisket, chicken, sausage, and 50 pounds of steamed vegetables are on the Big Ugly grille outside, waiting for this sermon to be over so we can all go and feast. Men who got up before dawn to cook... for the women! Big Ugly is the 13-foot-long homemade grille. Monster grille.

Proverbs 31 talks about a good woman being one you can trust. It paints a picture of a

woman who gives all of her time and energy for others.

Women in our church have faced challenges this week in daily life.

Tuesday night at midnight some of us were all in the hospital emergency room at midnight with Mickey. His knee was so swollen up and bruised from the injury in the men's church softball game that night that the emergency room staffers were coming into the room one at a time to just look at his knee. One nurse finally told Mickey that all the staff was talking about how they had never seen such an injury before.

Mickey's biggest concern was that Barbara would say, "See, I told you that you were too old to be playing softball." And she did say that. Then the doctor came into the room. Mickey led the doctor with the question, "Could this have happened anywhere?" Doctor replied to Mickey, "At your age and with your brittle bones, that injury could have happened at anytime and anywhere. The tendon just snapped and separated from your knee." Mickey said, "Would you say that again for my wife's sake?"

Not easy being a woman some days. Proverbs 31 has lots of wonderful images of how a person lives for others.

Our church is filled with men and women living for others in similar ways.

Carla Roberts of our church started chemo treatments this week for her breast cancer. She had to take off of work as the Physical Education teacher at DeZavala Elementary School for this first treatment. She showed up to the school Friday in a wheelchair to surprise and support and cheer for all students and faculty in the annual Field Day of fun and sports. One of Carla's dear teacher friends from another school took off on a Personal Day from teaching at another school and came over and helped take Carla's place at DeSavala since Carla had worked so hard toward this day all year.

What women of strength and compassion.

I was astounded this week to find that four men in this church volunteered to help Mickey by covering his bread route during this time he is down with a knee injury. Mickey delivers bread each morning starting at 1230 a.m. here in central Texas. Amazing that four men offered to run his middle-of-the-night bread route for him!

Sacrificial love and concern. That is what Proverbs 31 describes. Melanie slid into home plate this past Wednesday night during a softball game, sacrificing body parts to score the run that was so badly needed. She told me her dress-wearing days are over right now due to bleeding and scarred knees. Quite a woman.

Pam, like other good teachers and like other good mothers, is always concerned while awake and while sleeping about her 20 students and her two children living in Alabama and Germany.

Pam woke me up at 3 a.m. Wednesday night. Said she wanted to talk. Said she could not sleep. Mothers and teachers have periodic sleepless nights. Racing and concerned minds. I asked her what she wanted to talk about. She said, "Tell me the details of your day."

She fell asleep while I was talking. She was snoring. I woke her up and said, "I thought you woke me up because you wanted to talk." She said, "I wanted *you* to talk so *I* can go back to sleep." Sounded a lot like Curtis and others in church...I speak and people sleep. She said my voice is comforting and puts her to sleep.

Just like in church. I talk, you sleep. It is comforting and relaxing to gather and hear about God's love for us. Wake up. Time to eat. Some guys have been cooking a feast for you all night in Big Ugly. Amen.